

IDYLLS OF ANCIENT IND

Wouldst thou the life's young blossoms and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is pleased, enraptured, feasted, fed,
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sweet name combine,
I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said.

—*Goethe*.

SAKUNTALA

BY

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The course of true love never did run smooth
— *Shakspeare*

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PREFACE

THE reader of this little volume is entitled to an apology. Every Indian of to-day has better work to do than try his hand at English Poetry. An earnest endeavour alone, however, to bring to light some of the many hidden poetic treasures of an ancient literature that has ceased to be a spoken tongue, can partly justify an attempt of the kind which without that spirit is sure to be regarded too premature a venture if not the work of youthful folly. In the belief that sincerity of purpose would make amends for what merit lacks, I make bold to offer to the public "Idylls of Ancient Ind." The idyllic form has been specially chosen, for neither the epic nor the dramatic can so aptly serve the medium of an alien thought and culture. The Prelude, which is an imaginary thread song, will introduce the reader to the plan of the Idylls.

Sakuntala (the first of this series) ranks as a work of high and enduring excellence among the few great monuments of the world's best literature; and in Kalidas, its reputed author, the genius of the East bore its fullest and fairest flower. No wonder that the bard of Ujjaini wears even to this day the Koh-i-noor of poetic glory. Tempted, some time ago, by a desire to make known the beauties of his great work to such as

have had no time to study the original, I undertook with diffidence to render freely into idyllic poetry the subject of the drama. Carefully avoiding all the dramatic detail and embodying into verse only the cream of the narrative, I have pushed on the work for three years, during which time feeling that I was not wholly equal to the task, I spared no pains to bestow upon it the utmost labour with the view to preserve in English the spirit of the original. Also I have allowed myself some latitude by way of treatment. In this connection it will not be amiss to say that some of the finest fancies of the Author are too delicate to be rendered into English; they baffle all effort and seem almost beyond the pale of Western Art.

No rendering, however skilful, can do full justice to Kalidas; and I shall feel grateful to the public for indulgent consideration and for the kind sympathy they may extend in pardoning the shortcomings of this maiden attempt.

My thanks are due to Mr. R. V. Aiyer for having seen the proofs through the Press; and I am obliged to Messrs. Addison & Co. for the care they bestowed upon the execution of the work.

MADHAVA BAUG

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R. V. R.

IDYLLS OF ANCIENT IND

TO THE MUSE

Of Ind and Ind's high glory and her past,
And all that made her what she was of old,
Revered of all the world, great Muse, I sing :
Of mighty sages that first saw the Light,
Of warrior-kings, and gifted bards of yore
That sang angelic songs, of them that lived
In righteousness tho' in adversity's hour ;
Golden their utterances, godly their lives ;
Great themes of other days, loftier none,
That once inspired the mighty-minded bards
Of Ind in palmy days that were, now heard
But in faint echoes in neglected nooks,
And slowly dying into the silent music
Of still oblivion. While yet I sing
Tho' with faltering voice, aid, great Muse,

In this unequal task ; but one kind word,
O Goddess, from thy lips hath power to lead.
Such virtue dwells in thy sweet speech ; alone
Thy word endures ; all else disappears
In the dim void of time. At thy command
Sang loud the prophetic bards of old,
Those pilot stars of peace, and flooded the land
With light. But under other skies to sport,
Her thou hast forsaken. Goddess, come
While weeping Ind implores a kindred tear,
These long-forgotten shores but native thine.
Thou knowest from the beginning all things ;
Inspire my song ; thy blessing I invoke,
That I may, by thy glorious splendour led,
Reach to the end. O strengthen where I fail,
And from my heart drive the dim shades of night
With thy full day. O wake one gentle note
From thy many-stringed harp to still discord,
In crude idyllic numbers as I sing
Of some sacred relics of an Ind that was.

THE PRELUDE

Sweet are the cherished memories of youth,
And sweet the joys of bygone days. A land
Of smiling streams and happy fields, a land
Of smiling children and of happy homes,
A home of plenty and a land of sweets,
Such was the peaceful land of Moneypur.
The story ran of once a mighty realm
It was the capital ; and so it seemed
With many a mould'ring temple, raised of yore
By mighty kings but low in ruin laid
By the mightier hand of time. It seemed as tho'
A shadow of what it was. Far off the hills
Went circling and green valleys smiled between.
Midway betwixt the yellow fields, the wealth
Of Moneypur, and pastures of fresh lawn,
That stretched to many a league and stretching touched
The hills, bloomed many a garden of sweet fruit
And flower, the haunt of summertime ; and on
The hills grew lofty woods that seemed to kiss
The clear azure of the heavens. In that
Still place we spent the morning of our life
In Moneypur, the land of sacred shrines,

In Moneypur, the home of happy folk ;
Happy were they and kind and used to acts
Of benevolence ; and in their thankful hearts
Contentment lived ; so good were they and true,
That e'ery passing pilgrim said " No folk
More gentle than the folk of Moneypur."
In that delightful place sometime we lived,
Some six friends were we from childhood days,
And life went happy as a warbling brook.
Sometime we lived ; then parted ; each one way.
But while in Moneypur we stayed, oft by
The still river-banks or on the green hillslopes
Under the grey twilight it was our use
To meet ; and one amongst us was a youth,
A dreaming youth, and all about whose face
A mystic glory curled ; well-versed was he
In the ancient lore of Ind ; and from his home
Far had he wandered to many a holy shrine
And seen the folk of other realms. He seemed
A spirit of the past. " A golden age " he held
' There was ; a golden age is yet to come ;
These iron times, this godless age, a night
Before the day." And many tales he told
Of them that lived true lives and pure—tales culled,
The brightest from the profuse star-dust glittering.

From time to time we heard him as he told
Them all ; and when each ended, his breath seemed
Shaped upon his lips and in our ears
His utterance still ling'ring. "Take" said he
"The purpose of these tales to heart ; for tho'
Rude be the setting, still the jewel shines."
And with no further prelude to the tales,
He spake and in clear accents thus began.

SAKUNTALA

OR

THE TALE OF THE LOST RING

At Hastinapur, on the sacred banks
Of lordly-rolling Jumna on whose wave
Floated the splendour of its lofty spires,
Reigned, gladdening the people of the land,
Puru, the father of the mighty race
Of kings who ruled in aftertime all Ind
Between high Vindhya crowned with stately woods
And silver-pinnacled Himalay ; he lived
His time and died. And after many years,
Came long in descent from him Dushyanta

And ruled the land ; and all the people bless'd him
And he ruled them well; a loving prince, he loved
His people all and all his people loved
Him as their sire, who chid them when they wronged
And taught them e'er to follow virtuous ways,
To love each other and to live in peace ;
And for this they loved him all the more. Thus was
The state a holy brotherhood that strove
Towards a noble end; and the king urged
Them all to walk the path of righteousness
That leads to the golden goal ; and in their hearts
Envy never was and lust for gold
They never knew ; but used to offices
Of mercy, kindness, and of charity,
They yoked themselves full-hearted to fulfil
The lofty purpose worthy of the king.
So lived they under his good rule ; so passed
Their days in blissful contentment and joy.

One morn, one happy morn, ere the blushing sun
Faintled the green hillsides and sleeping woods
In saffron and in rose, the youthful king,
Some merry hours intent in sport to spend,
Quit his city-walls and started on a chase.
And many huntsmen followed him and he

Sate in his car of ebony and drove
Foremost ; and in his hand a bow he held
Which none but he could string ; and at his back
A teeming quiver wrought with subtlest skill
Hung and bright it shone. On, on, they passed
O'er level meadows clad in vernal green,
By breezy hills all sloping rich in blooms ;
And as they passed, came from the neighb'ring woods
And from the fields the fragrance of prime flowers
And morning melody of birds ; for then
It was the time when e'ery wind that blows
Brings balms new-stolen from far haunts of flowers,
And all day long the music of the birds
On the breeze comes floating and delights the ear.
Thro' valleys and between wide fields they passed
And saw the sturdy ploughmen at the plough
Their morning toil commencing ; on either side,
The pastures lay, whereon heavy-uddered kine
Browsed followed by the calves. Not very far
And yet not nigh, grew lofty-crested woods
Of green tamala trees and 'mountain pine
And stately palm and branching banyan ;
And far beyond the woods before them lay,
Measuring all the world from end to end,
Himalay, silver-mantled and sublime,

Legends of Ancient India

With thousand pinnacles of virgin snow,
That soared in solitary majesty
And vanished in the clouds ; and the high woods
That clothed the bases of the mountain seemed
Like shadows of broad-breasted clouds in the sky.
With quickened pace they rode, the king foremost ;
And reaching, deep among the woods they plunged ;
When lo, upon the stately-stretching boughs
Of many-knotted trees they saw gay birds
Of lovelier plumage and heard sweeter notes ;
And hither, thither, thro' the wood, by bush
And tree, the natives wandered monarch-like :
Fleet-footed antelopes, some spotty-clad,
Some golden-mantled, and some snowy-fair,
And chamari with all her lavish wealth
Of flowing glossy hair, and musk-deer proud.

But when the noise of chase rang thro' the woods,
The proud creatures hied to their familiar homes ;
For ne'er such strange new sounds disturbed their still.
One only antelope far off was seen
Grazing unmindful and the king came on
And would have pierced the shaft into his frame,
But the quick deer started up and bounded far
And free ; anon he turned his graceful neck,

The branching antlers glistening as he turned,
And saw the king pursuing and a shaft
Towards him turned and shining; oft the quarry,
The keenly-pointed weapon dreading, drew in
His length and forward rushed with breathless speed;
And all the while, fresh blades of grass dropped loose
On the way, with half-chewed mouthfuls as he sped;
So quick he cleared each bush and heath, he seemed
In his airy bounds to fly. A skilled archer he,
The royal hunter followed up the chase,
While the rest strove to keep pace with the king
But failed and lingered far behind; and ere
The antelope could know, the king came on
And all but won the game; but while in act
The shining shaft to throw, a voice heard
That came full-throated from behind the trees:
“O spare yon harmless antelope, great prince,
That loves to wander in these holy woods.”
The king, at this surprised, withheld the shaft,
And wond’ring whence the utterance came, this way
And that looked eager, when forth a hermit stept.
A kindly expression his face bespoke
And meek with meditation beautiful;
In one hand a wreath of holy beads he held
And in the other blades of the holy herb.

Mindful of the sage, the king from his car
Alighting due reverence made, and the sage
Advancing thus "Restore, good prince, thy shaft
To the quiver; 'tis noble to protect the weak,
Not harm." With such good grace the hermit spoke,
His lofty accents swayed the king and he
Obeyed. The sage was pleased; and lifting up
His right arm, with a voice prophetic-bold,
Blessed him with a son, one who would reign
In aftertime a righteous king and rule
An empire stretching vast from sea to sea;
And said "E'en in the woods is felt thy power,
And everywhere breathes peace; know, king, here free
Our holy rites we do and in these groves
Offer sacrifices to the Lord;
Here all day long in meditation spend
Our thought and live in joy; and in thy realm
Sweet order lives, the child of sober rule.
So ruled the mighty elders of thy race
And such art thou; long live and rule our king."
And the king was glad. But now 'twas nigh the hour
Of noon, and the sage, eager to collect
Embers worthy of the holy fire
Ere closing of the day, spake thus "Good king,
Look yonder where with bowers on either bank

Malinee all her wealth of crystal rolls ;
And on the right the modest hermitage
Of Kanwa stands ; go thither, prince, and share
The humble offering of our homes : wild fruits
And sweet water, the bounty of the woods.
But yestermorn he left the hermitage
For Somateertha where to pray he's wont
To go ; and at the hermitage stays fair
Sakuntala, his foster-child, and tends
Guests that chance to pass her home." The king
Said "Aye" and bowed ; and the sage smiling passed on.

And after that the king sate in his car
And towards the hermitage forth went ; and ere
The sun in the high noon of his glory shone,
Came on the lovely shores of Malinee ;
And saw the river, that, with its waters pure
As innocence, flowed, kissing the light o' heaven,
And babbling, pleased with the music of its own.
And hundred-knotted trees upon the banks
Stood like hoary sages of old and seemed
In still meditation ; while little birds
Hurrying from bough to bough made melody,
Like angels ministering the beloved o' heaven
With kind offices and rich bursts of song.

A sweet serenity breathed everywhere
And grandeur that mocked the pomp of kings.

Then from his car the king alighting gave
His bow and shining quiver to him that drove
The chariot and thus "These weapons take,
Fit implements of cruel war ; and peace
Hath no need of these ; the star of peace
Shines brighter than the meteor of war.
Go to the neighb'ring wood and 'neath its shade
Stay thou and let these goodly steeds from the yoke
To wander on the mountain lawn. Methinks
Long distance we have come and they will take
Much time to reach us ; should they come ere eve,
Tell them all this mandate, that no man
Shall harm the creatures of these woods. I go
To the hermitage and ere the sunset hour
Will to this wood return." So said the king
And robed himself in simplest mantles mild.
Yet from his looks beamed kingly majesty
With true authority wedded that claimed
Due reverence and awe. A welcome porch
His steps invited and he entered straight.
A wind blew gentle and the noonday sun
Smiled friendly thro' the leafy oriel

Of the time-honored trees that sage-like stood
And venerable, mantled in rifted bark
And rough with twisted knots ; while garlanding
The boughs hung creepers gay with blooms and bent
With ripe berry ; and from the boughs hung nests
Of birds ; the peacock danced upon the trees
Ruffling his wings of thousand hues ; and safe
In hollows of the trunks the parrot made .
His home ; from 'neath the leafy canopy
Sang salunkhi, the minstrel of the woods.
And high o'erhead the pendant hives he saw
Wherein the bees their fragrant treasure stored.
Joy filled his heart ; to the hermitage he went,
When lo, such flowers as blow in dewy plots
Of Paradise he saw and sporting fawns
And antelopes that looked him in the face
With large round eyes of friendship and pure love.
In such society with two dear maids,
Sakuntala, the maiden of the woods,
Sakuntala, the darling of the gods,
She lived ; among fawns and flowers her sole delight.

Serenest peace invested all the place,
And holy calm, the calm of sweet devotion,
That nought can ruffle, brooded over all.

The king beheld with joy those antique trees,
And the sweet song of birds delighted him ;
The hermitage with all its charm of fawns
And flowers possessed him and sweet solitude
Him pleased and in wakeful reverie he sank.
Just then a voice, from within a grove
That neighb'ring stood, came borne upon the wind,
Sweeter than the rippling of the rill,
That stole, in crescent by the hermitage,
On beds of rounded pebble fair as pearl.
He woke, so strange, so sweet, the music came.
He paused and listened to those whispers soft,
As the lone night-lotus in its ample bloom
Lists to the solo of the nightingale
In the stillness of a starry night. Then slow
Toward the side from which the whispers came
He turned, lest one rude step should make discord;
What time three busy maidens met his view,
Three tall shapes, one loveliest of them all,
Nursing the tender plants of the hermitage
With water from the neighb'ring brook ; a pot
Of fitliest size each carried on her waist
The cooling drink to gather and to pour :
Two sister virgins about a lovely maid,
Like two kindred stars about the full-orbed moon

In a sky of summer ; her dear playmates they,
And the maid, a nursling of the gods, she seemed.
"How fair, divinely fair, they look " he said
"Sure, ne'er palatial halls embrace such charms,
E'en the wildest bloom outshines the garden rose. "
So saying he concealed himself behind
An aged banyan by the thornless fence
That hedged the lovely garden in ; from there
Beheld them watering and the noon was still.
They pursuing their delightful toil,
In merry company that no stranger marred,
Smiling and sporting to the banyan came.
"This way, this way, my dear maids, this way,"
The silver accents, came once more upon
His ravished ears ; it was Sakuntala
Called her maids. O with what joy he saw
Beauty all spotless, Beauty whose loveliness
Ne'er painter fixed in hues nor sculptor wrought
In chiselled marble or in bronze ; all grace
Stored up : the charm of wanton curls, sweet eyes
That like twin violets of the valley smiled,
And parted lips that mocked the rose in bloom.
Fair as the flowers, that blossomed in the plots
Beside the hermitage and blowing claimed
Her toil of e'eryday and tender care,

The youthful maiden smiled ; and clad in bark
Stately like a woodland-nymph she seemed ;
And lovely as the summer moon, her face
Was mild with the native hue of innocence.
The splendour of her eyes flashed suddenly
On him ; he felt the light into his being.
The glory of her form kindled expression,
And in broken accents tho' he burst in joy
" O dear perfection, art thou flesh and blood,
Or art thou but a mocking fantasy,
A charm, a vision, or a noonday dream ?"
So low he spoke, he scarce heard all he said.

So sweet and yet so angelic she seemed,
Her presence was to him music exquisite ;
His ears drank the music of her utterance,
His eyes seemed pleased with the music of her beauty,
And gladdened was his soul beyond expression
Enamoured with the music of her being.
But they, Sakuntala and her dear maids,
—Of them one seemed more artless and more frank
And Anusuya was she called, more gentle she ;
And younger of the two, Priyamvada,
More full of cheer, yet sober, more fond of play,
Who spake words sweet as honey and full of wit—

This way and that went watering the plants,
And talk of happy kind mingled with toil
Made the hours more happy. Each spake to each
In wonted glee, while from behind the tree
The king marked the meaning of their mirth ; and oft
Spake to himself, pleased with their playful talk
Of happy things. Meantime in sportive mood,
The goodly Anusuya with a gentle smile
To Sakuntala thus " So Kanwa holds
More dear to him than thee these plants and flowers
Of the hermitage ; for see what toil the sage
Assigned to thee, these plants and flowers to tend,
Thyself tho' tender as a flower. " " Nay " said she
" A more than his authority me prompts
This happy toil to do ; these flowers that smile
With mute expression and these plants me charm
With speechless eloquence of love ; their being
A part of mine own being I feel ; one life
We live as children of one home. " And the king
Felt pity for the maid. " Too fair " said he
" Too fair to toil and to tend : Beauty
More fit to grace the halls of royalty,
To tread on roses and be robed in pearls. "

The three fair maidens then the happy toil

Resumed. But she, Sakuntala, in act
While watering, felt irksome and she turned
To Anusuya and in whisper low
Yet clear "This robe of bark she fastened fast
About my bosom ; pray, soft loosen it."
"O blame not me ; 'tis blooming youth imparts
Hourly fulness to thy bosom " said
Priyamvada, more playful of the two.
The king said "Aye" and thought within himself
"Sweet words and true ; her form like some fair bud
Hath latent grace. The rude apparel yet
Sets off her loveliness, like the thick fold,
That on the bud divides itself at prime,
Doth half conceal and half reveal to view
The bloom within ; how graceful and divine ;
As the lotus lovely in a moss-grown pond,
Or the moon fair in her spotty majesty,
This maiden looks : her vests of woven bark
But add to perfection a lovelier hue.
Yea, native beauty hath her own sweet charms,
That far outshine the dull and pale-rayed gloss
Of foreign ornament."

Now while a wind
Bearing the incense from the flowers blew soft

And swept thro' all the garden whispering,
Sakuntala with still fond eyes beheld
In centre of the garden-ground, all fresh,
And shook by the wind this way and that, all green,
A sapling of the far-famed bakul tree,
By her at seedtime planted the previous year.
It seemed to call her with its tender shoots
Obedient to the wind ; and to the tree
She went ; and as she bowed, the circling trench
About the tree to fill, Priyamvada
In a voice that thrilled with high mirth called "O stay
Beside the tree, a moment stay, nor move,
For like a creeper seems thy fair thin form,
That clasping coils and weds the tree." "And so
They call thee" said Sakuntala "sweet-tongued,
One that e'er speaks of happy things." And the king
Resumed tho' low "Most right ; how creeper-like
This slender-waisted maiden ; her lips that shame
The crimson of fresh tendrils, and her arms
Soft as twin branches, and all her perfect form
Fair with the full bloom of youth. Beauty
In all things fair seems most alike and true."

Ere this Sakuntala, the tall fair maid,
Had filled the trench ; and glad at heart she turned

From the tree and turning came with gentle steps
And slow, her pot new-filled, to where a jasmine,
By her named 'The moonlight of the grove,'
Upon a youngling of the mango climbed
In many a tender coil ; it was starr'd with blooms
That trembled as the wind blew over them ;
So close they blossomed on the branching stalks,
They mocked or seemed to mock in mingled pride
The milky way. Joy lit her face ; and coming,
"Behold" she said "fair in her blooming charms,
The amorous jasmine with her twining stalks
Around the mango clings in fond embrace ;
She, self-espoused bride, enamoured hangs,
While the soft tendrils of the mango press
Oft her coy lips with many a loving kiss."
So saying, she, oft with her gentle hands,
The lovely jasmine and the mango felt ;
And lingered gazing at them both awhile
With mixed looks of joy and envy, which
The secret prompting of her mind betrayed.
This marked the king and the other maidens too ;
They asked her the familiar *what* and *why*,
When a rosy blush came lightly on her cheek
Ere the twinkling of a star ; then with a smile
Of maiden pride as maids are wont, she thus

“Speak for yourselves, I care not what ye say.”

And while with chaste blush to the maids she spake,
The music of her speech upon him came,
As the wind that from among pastoral reeds
Comes on the flowery banks of brooks. Her gaze
Charmed e'ery sense ; his spirit quaffed to fill
The native elixir of her beauty's fount.
Him all utterance failed ; rapt in such joy
As angels feel, he breathed or seemed to breathe
The sweet aroma of her youthful bloom.
Such mute communion he held and long
With her charms passing fair, he lost his being,
And knew but that she spake, she smiled, she blushed.
But she, intent on finishing her work
Of everyday proportioned to her lot,
Proceeded with her task ; her dear maids
Had both finished their part, and she, the sweet maid,
Longed to join them ; then with all haste
Her slender limbs permitted, she pushed on
The delightful toil ; the lovely jasmine first
Claimed her care, and from her pot she poured
All the crystal wetting e'ery leaf and flower ;
And as she poured, sweet fragrance, such as when
Kind earth breathes after gentle showers from heaven,

Filled the garden nook ; and all his heart
Went gladdened forth to embrace her as she came.
But ere she moved from the jasmine that she loved,
A bee, that all the while sat on a flower,
Stealing the balmy nectar from the bloom,
By the falling showers disturbed, suddenly left
The bloom and all at once into the air
Sprang quick and springing wheeled and buzzed about
The lovely maiden that was standing by.
And many a time about the gazing maid
It flew, as tho' enamoured of her face
That smiled as when the bloom is full ; the king
Beheld the hovering bee, and, while it flew,
Burst in low yet in fond accents thus.
" Ah happy bee, a blessed lot is thine.
O that I were thou, then I may claim
Her glances as she coyly throws them round,
And whisper tender tales of love to her,
And whispering, drink the honey of her lips
E'en as she blushes, as she blushes now."

And still about the frightened maid it flew
And still she moved and still it followed her.
And many a time one slender arm she raised
As tho' to shun the bee, while the other held

The pot just emptied of its crystal load.
And still it flew ; then called Sakuntala
Her maids to rid her of the bee and they
Came not to her but stayed by the banyan
And answer made, full conscious that the bee
Could harm her not "O call Dushyanta now,
The royal guardian of these sacred woods."
(They knew not he was there, they spake in sport)
At this the king, tho' felt impelled to go
And help the maid, yet moved not, thinking "Now
I shall not go, lest they should know me king
And honor me as king and not speak to me
As to a commoner." Sakuntala
Oft shunned the bee, while e'en in her repulse
Grace lingered, yet the fond bee left her not.
"O come " once more she cried "and help, this bee
Still follows me." But ere the maidens came,
Full before their view, with stately steps
Advanced, mantled in robes of purest white,
Dushyanta from behind the aged banyan,
Beneath whose shade they stood, and in gentle words
"While one of Puru's race yet rules the realm,
And his foe-compelling sceptre holds to beckon
Peace, what foe still dares molest the maids
That keep their vigils in these holy groves ? "

They started at the coming of the king ;
Such kingly grace shone thro' his eyes ; and loose
About his manly temples curled his hair
And hung like a halo about his face ; long-armed,
Broad-chested, and well-built of body, tall,
And stately like a warrior he seemed,
And like a king ; and on his forehead sat
Bright honor like a goddess high enthroned,
And victory dwelt in his godlike face
Loftily enshrined. And him seeing
Due signs of reverence the maidens made.
And Anusuya from her first surprise
Recovering " None but a bee ; ere now
It flew about this fair Sakuntala,
Our dear maid, and she cried loud." The king
To Sakuntala turning in soft words
The wonder-stricken maiden thus addressed
' I trust it fares well with ye all that live
In the hermitage." But she, coy maid, spake not ;
And Anusuya answer made " All fares
Well with us in the hermitage, good sir ;
Happy are we at your coming and we feel
In honor is to claim society
With the good." And saying this she offered him
Forest-fare : ripe berry and wild fruits,

Sweet-juiced like nectar, and good honey in hue
Like pure pale gold, charged with the scent of flowers,
And milk fresh-drawn which Priyamvada brought
From the hermitage, and cold clear water from
The neighb'ring brook ; and the king ate of the fare.

And after that they went to where on the left
A green tamala stood ; and 'neath its shade
They sat and talk of happy kind talked they.
“A goodly fellowship ” said he “alike
Are ye of age and fair ;” and such kind talk
Made bold the forest maidens and they spake
To him with less reserve of heart. But she,
The fair sweet maid Sakuntala, spake not.
She saw him and new thoughts filled all her heart,
Thoughts which her maiden life had never known
Ere him she saw ; strong feeling choked her voice
And in her mind she thought “Who may this be,
This godlike person ?” A longing felt her soul
To know him and to make him her lifelong friend.
As the sun in springtime from the virgin earth
Wakens at prime new buds, so the sight of the king
In her maiden heart wakened sweet thoughts of love.
She knew not it was love, yet in her heart
Strange friendship lingered, which the maid revealed

By a new light that upon her gentle face
Came, and the maid knew it not ; and they,
Her dear maids marked the light upon her face
And knew the thoughts of their dear mate. And she,
The goodly Anusuya, asked him then
The saintly race of kings whereof he was
The fairest flower, what realm he ruled, and why
Thro' the rough woods to the hermitage he came.
Then Dushyanta made answer thus " Bid by
The monarchs of the Puru-race am I
To see if all men live just in the land ;
And came I here to the hermitage to know
If all things fare well with ye in the woods."
At this, in whisper low the two dear maids
To Sakuntala spake " If Kanwa now
Were here—" " what if " said she as tho' in spite,
They knew he loved her and she loved him too)
He then would give this guest his dearest thing"
aid they. " I know not what ye mean " said she
and blushed.

Then the king, he loved Sakuntala,
asked the maidens of her birth and race ;
he sage he met while chasing the antelope
and told him she was Kanwa's foster-child.

And they then told him all what they had heard
Old Kanwa say of her—how in the wood,
Where Viswamitra in meditation lived,
One morn in springtime when the blossoms blowed
And brooks ran making music sweet, she came,
The lovely Menaka, sent by the gods,
Nine times more beautiful than morn ; and coming
E'en to the lake, that by his hermitage
Rippled with many a lily and lotus mild,
She dipt her fair nude form into the lake,
Herself a flower more fair than all the flowers.
And Viswamitra passing by beheld
Her splendour, thro' the crystal of the lake,
Bright, like golden lightning thro' clear clouds.
Then he, forgetting all his pious work
Of many years, went to the lovely maiden ;
And even on the pebbled brink, while birds
Sang loud and soft winds blew, he wed the maid.
Nine years he lived with her in the stately woods
Of Himalay solaced by running brooks
And cataracts that tumbling from the heights
Went sparkling among flower and fern ; and him
She all day long delighted with sweet caress
And fed his ears with music and with song.
And thus for them living in the stately woods

For nine short years, the tenth drew nigh ; and she
Went big with child ; and while springtime came on,
Mantling the green hillslopes and dewy vales
With blooms and buds, a lovely girl more fair
Than her own mother saw the light of morn.
But when, the child in her hands, and robed in white
To him she went, he turned and shunned the sight ;
For waking from the idle dream of love
He took to the woods and lived a life of fast
And prayer ; and she went to her native realms,
Leaving in the woods her child to the gentle care
Of kind sakunta birds ; so Kanwa, while
To his hermitage returning from the woods,
One morning found the child nursed by the birds ;
And pity for the child bedimmed his eyes ;
He took the child to his hermitage and her
He called Sakuntala. " So this fair maid "
said Anusuya " is daughter to a nymph."
But true " said Dushyanta, with a gentle smile,
For lightning is no native of the earth
But a noble nursling of the sky ; " whereat
Sakuntala, thus talked of by him she loved,
Bowed down her head ; a smile stole on her lips
Which she with maiden will suppressed ; and the king
Resumed the talk of her he loved. " Will she "

Said he to Priyamvada "lead such life
Of solitary vows till wedlock hour,
Or all life long dwell with these antelopes,
That will look her in the face with like bright eyes,
And live out her days in lone virginity,
As the flower blowing in the lonely wilds
But lends its fragrance to a blind cold world
And wasting withers on the native thorn?"
Then she thus smiling "We in the hermitage
That live do naught at our sole will. Yet he,
The noble Kanwa, has a goodly mind
To yield her to a worthy lord, one who
Will ever hold her dearest in his heart
And treat her with all love and gentleness."
Then as one, in the greenwoods wandering
By noon, sees from far a little gladsome light
Upon the sward beside a fountain's brink,
And knows it some wild spark brightly burning,
Some dewdrop blazing with the flame of noon,
And knowing, comes on the sloping sward, and coming,
Finds on the spot to his joy a rich jewel,
So fared it with the king and he was glad.

But when Priyamvada to the king thus spake,
The coy sweet maid, Sakuntala, as tho'

Ill-pleased, said thus to Anusuya " Here
Longer I shall not stay ; Priyamvada
Says aught she likes ; to the aged Gautumi,
Of her I will speak." And saying this she rose
Her stately height, the maid still weary seemed
With noonday toil, and towards the hermitage
Her slow steps turned. Then Anusuya spake
" It ill becomes thee thus to go away."
But ere the maid a few steps moved, strange things
Passed thro' Dushyanta's mind ; to follow her
Strong feeling urged him ; yet the courtly king
Moved not ; and sitting he followed her or thought
He followed her and quick returned. So fares
The lover's fancy feeding on golden dreams.
Meantime Priyamvada held by the hand
The forest maid Sakuntala ; and holding
" Go not " said she ; and " why " the maiden asked,
Her arching brows raised, and Priyamvada
Made prompt reply " Last noon, two plants for thee
' watered ; pray, go not before the debt
s paid." This said she that Sakuntala
flight stay yet in the presence of the king ;
Whereat such pity for the gentle maid
All his kind heart moistened, love, that yet lay
lute in his bosom, wakened with a voice.

So weary seemed the maid ; her slender arms
Drooped ; and her tender palms, that all the while
Were busy with watering, blushed deep ; still heaved
Her bosom and still fell ; while in her ear
The soft-petalled sireesha half withering hung ;
And rounded dewdrops like to fair round pearls
Yet lingered on her temples and her cheeks ;
And all her hair, that, while about her flew
The bee, divided and dividing fell
On either side her graceful neck and floated
In loosened tresses down to her slender waist
Behind her, she with one arm uplifted
Held. So fared Sakuntala and the king
Brooked not the sight ; and ere Sakuntala
The toil resumed, from off his finger took
The ring he wore, the richest in the realm,
Whereon was chiselled the emblem of royalty
And which in jewelled letters bore his name ;
And offered it to Priyamvada saying
“ Take, kind maid, this ring and in return,
Pray, free her of the debt she owes.” They saw
The ring ; it sparkled as a radiant star.
And on the ring they read his name ; they knew
He was their king, Dushyanta, brave and just,
And lord of all that mighty realm. So kind

Was he and loving, they spake to him their thoughts
With artless wit : but forest maidens they
And native unto frankness. Priyamvada
Then to the king thus with a smile " Kind words
Are more than richest gems." And saying this
To Sakuntala turned and spake " Now go
Thy way ; be thankful to the kingly guest."
But she, she had no mind to go, stayed yet
In his presence and high hopes filled all his heart ;
And in his mind he thought " Tho' the coy maid
Speaks not to me, love in her maiden heart
Yet listens to my tale ; and all things seeing,
She sees but me." So thought he and was pleased.

But now the sun sunk low behind the hills,
And tranquil shades of eve came floating on,
With winds, that, blowing over brook and field,
Distilling balm, went sighing, dewy-bosomed,
Bearing their native nursling sleep ; and birds,
The harpless warblers of the woodland halls,
Hied to their nests ; and from the pastures far,
Fleet-footed antelopes came bounding on
To the hermitage, their place of nightly rest ;
And loudly from over neighb'ring wolds was heard
The lowing of the homeward-pacing kine ;

Whereat they parted—he to the neighb’ring wood,
Where his brave huntsmen sheltered in the camps,
That scattered lay like bee-hives on the banks
Of Malinee, and waited his approach ;
They to the hermitage, that with its trees,
Their branches trembling to the fitful breeze,
Seemed to call them at the customary hour.
And parting some few words they spake to him,
Some sweet words of farewell, and he thanked
Them for their kindness and they went. But she,
Sakuntala, while going, stayed as tho’
A thorn on the greensward whereon she trod
Pricked her ; she stayed that she might yet see him.
Awhile she stayed, then moved ; but ere she went
A few steps, once again she stayed and turned,
As tho’ she felt her flowing mantle held
By the tender stalks of the little plants that grew
Upon the pathway side ; she stayed and turned
And turning saw the king ; he saw the maid
Him seeing, and in her mild eyes he read
This message ‘ I am thine.’ Sakuntala,
Him seeing thus and by him, seen moved on
With them her dear mates ; and passing by
The long avenues of lofty trees, disappeared.
Her he followed with love-laden eyes

Thro' the darkening avenues, till from his view
She faded as fades a vision in the dream.
Then sighed he many a heavy sigh and thought
"Ah me, she is gone, the fair Sakuntala,
Fair as the flower and tender as the fawn.
How came the maid among these woods to live ?
She loves me; O she were but mine. This wood,
Which she with her bright presence makes beautiful,
Is all my world ; all else is nought. To be
With her is life. Here shall I stay not far
From her sweet home. Love draws me to the maid,
And to my capital I cannot go."
So thought he and he paused ; and then "O will
She yield, the maiden of the hermitage,
Else cruel love, why torment me in vain ?"
The king thus thinking passed beneath the trees
To the neighb'ring wood ; with slow steps he moved on ;
But the full-flowing current of his heart
Rolled back as streams a pennon borne against
The wind.

He reached the wood. It was the hour
Of sweet even, the sacred hour of worship
And prayer ; and before the hermitages blazed
Upon the altars many a holy fire,

As the many stars that twinkled in the heavens.
The aged hermits of the place in loud strains
Hymned His praise ; and from their devout bosoms
Rose heavenward the homage of their souls
To the Lord, as the rich vapour with fresh balm
Rolled to the skies from blazing tongues of fire
That on the altars with pure splendour burned.
And worship o'er, they ended ; the soft still hour
Of sleep came on and they with gladsome hearts
Their hermitages entering disappeared,
As birds that after singing sunset songs
Fly to their many nests and are seen no more.
And all the wood was hushed. Then rose the moon
Full-orbed in the clear blue heavens and smiled,
And shed her silver over all the hills ;
And the still woodland slept beneath her ray.
Nor aught was heard but the lone nightbird's song,
And the sweet ripple of the brook that stole
Beneath the moon, and the voice of the fitful wind
That made faint music in the trees ; while the stars
Seemed rapt with listening ; and Dushyanta,
From whose fond eyes love banished sleep, alone
Lay wake. He sought the moonlight-laven banks
Of Malinee ; so much the stillness charmed.
And many happy thoughts came to his mind,

As on the breezy banks he lingered musing.
And while the sweet sound of the ripples came,
He in fond accents thus enamoured spake.

‘O brooklet, brooklet, singing, singing sweet,
Thy ripples know not half her gentleness ;
Yet sweeter, sweeter, canst thou never sing,
For sweeter is the music of her voice.’

He spake and o’er him shone the bright full moon
And whitened all the starry heavens and lighted
The still dark avenues that shaded the banks.
So much her presence filled him that he sang.

‘And yet, pale moon, why smilest thou so fair,
While ‘neath thy beam the coy sweet maiden sleeps ;
Say, say, can all thy silvery loveliness
Match the chaste splendour on her maiden brow.’

And saying this he turned to where, close by,
The dewy greensward lay, half light, half shade.
And as he turned, he felt the nightwind smite
Fresh on his temples ; then in sweet low voice
He spake his thoughts for all his heart was full.

‘O nightwind, blowing over lake and field,
And lightly shaking e’ery leaf and flower,
Soft is thy breath, thy balmy breath is soft ;
But softer, softer, is the maiden’s breath.’

Then came he on the greensward ; by its side
Rippled a lake fed by a woodland spring ;
And on its bosom the silvery moonlight slept.
And where the ripples kissed the shore, smiled fair
In bloom the nightly-blowing flowers breathing
Pure balm ; while in the breezy shade some drooped
With folded petals and waited the hour of dawn.
He saw and from his lips such utterance flowed.

‘O ye wan flowers that waken with the sun,
And ye that blossom while the stars do shine,
Still fairer, fairer she than all your hosts ;
More charm dwells in her than in all your folds.’

And after that, the stars his fond fancy took ;
And as the starlight came between the leaves
That trembled, he thus spake to the stars as one
That speaks in the dream and knows not all he speaks.

‘O speak, ye stars that lighten all the heavens,
Can all your blazing glory e’er outshine
The bright ethereal luxury that dwells
In the dewy azure of her bashful eyes.’

He ended ; from the boughs the gentle song
Of a chakravaki came ; she in fond strains
Warbled all her tale of love to him,

Her absent lord: sole emblems of pure love
And tried constancy; fond creatures they,
That haunt the solitary wilds of Ind;
And on the still greenbanks of pastoral brooks,
Or by clear lakes, or under bowery shade,
Sport all day long, caressing and caressed;
But blinded by the darkness of the night,
Sing lone thro' the still hours, longing for the morn.
He heard; and as the song came on the wind,
The passion in his heart thus shaped itself.

‘O nightbird, lingering under leafy shade,
And warbling all night long amorous lay,
Knowest thou, lone bird, there breathes more tenderness
In her one sweet whisper than in all thy song.’

So pouring out the music of his heart
In fond utterance to the midnight hours,
On the still banks of Malinee he lingered,
Till sleep weighed on his tired eyes and he slept

Then morn, in the sweet wake of morning birds,
Came, brightening all the dewy Orient,
Arrayed in champak and in rosy pearl.
He woke; far off upon the meadows browsed
The kine; and birds sang notes of joy; in herds

To dewy-sprinkled pastures sped the deer.
And thro' all the wood soft breezes gently blew
Breathing freshness; and he thought "To chase
These antelopes that live in these still woods?
Blest they that claim her sweet society;
A kindred charm dwells in their eyes, the charm
Of innocence that fills those virgin orbs."
So thinking, Dushyanta gave up the chase;
And under woodland shade lay musing, lost
In sweet thoughts, till noon, fond memories recalling.
And when the sun was highest in the heavens,
Came he upon the banks of Malinee.
Hither came he and thought "In yonder bowers,
That shun the noon, perchance the maiden stays
With them, her playmates; thither shall I go."
Hope urged him as he came, Love led the way;
And he heard the warbling of the birds, and felt
The wind, that stole cool spray from rippling lake,
Bringing balm from flowery plots, upon
The greenbanks blowing as it came; it quenched
The fever of his limbs and he went on
To where not far a grove of stateliest trees,
Of bakul, bela, banyan, and palm,
Stood by the riverside: a fellowship
Of woodland shade; it was the loveliest spot

Idylls of Ancient Ind

In all the woodland ; there beneath the trees
A little brooklet rippled with sweet song,
Hurrying, with many a curve to Malinee,
On shining pebbles white as virgin snow,
And fringed on either side with loveliest blooms,
Champak, and lily, jessamine, and rose,
That lived their day and withered where they bloomed ;
And the sunbeams came between the netted leaves
And danced upon the waves as tho' for joy,
And the very brooklet sparkled as it went.

He came and saw ; beneath a stately bower
Lay Sakuntala upon a bed
Of tenderest flowers and sprinkled with soft leaves
Washed with the brooklet's dew ; beside her sate
Her two dear maids and fanned ; while round her arms
The long cool lotus-stalk went coiling.
'ensive they sat beside the troubled maid,
Who all the morn his absence mourned and longed
Still to wed. So much her fancy poured
On him and his fair form, his presence was
To her the fount of everflowing delight.
Else the maid forgot ; the little flowers
And sporting fawns charmed not ; and from her face
The wonted cheer faded ; and in her looks

Some strange emotion lingered, half concealed,
Half visible, divided between hope
And fear ; whereat they spake to Gautumi,
The eldest matron of the place, of the maid,
And the still languor that weighed upon her mind ;
And permitted, they led the drooping maid
To the bower and on soft flowery couch
They laid her that she might breathe cool fresh air
Blowing from over lake and field. In such
Sad mood Dushyanta found the maid pining.
Languid she lay upon the flowers and wan.
Her lips had lost the crimson ; and her breasts,
In buxom fulness tho', drooped as twin buds,
Droop to the noonday sun ; anon she threw
Mournful glances, and as she looked around,
Tears such as the immortals weep rolled down
Her temples fair ; her very face was pale
As the winter moon ; and in her saddest plight,
Tho' wan still beautiful, in tears yet fair.
And as she lay upon the bed, her hair
Floated round her temples in dark curls
That shook to the wanton wind ; her tall fair form,
Stretched to its fullest length, was buried half
In flowers that loved to hold her in their midst ;
The glow of her dainty limbs stole on the blooms,

And the soft wind gathered fragrance as she spake.

He saw them and the maid ; and from behind
The bower he heard them as they spake and they
Knew not. Then Anusuya to the maid
“ Pray, speak what ails thee, that thou in such state
Grievest, giving pain ; yet friendship claims
Bitter affliction’s salty tear.” And she,
Priyamvada, thus to the coy fair maid
“ But true. Like those love-smitten of the days
Of old, thou seemest ; speak, pale is thy frame,
Yet in thy languid limbs dwells the glow of youth
As splendour in the pearl.” Sakuntala
Thought in herself “ What shall I say to them?”
Then from her bed she rose and sitting paused ;
And as the maiden paused, Dushyanta thus
‘ How faded is the maiden, yet how fair,
Like the sear-wind blighted jasmine beautiful ?
She lives in Nature, Nature lives in her.
What may this be, that thus gains conquest o’er
Her maiden mind ? Yet now she will speak to them,
Her dear mates, all the longing of her heart.”
Sakuntala then spake “ Him yesternoon
saw and from that time such forgetting
Creeps over me.” Joy brightened all his face

As the sweet words came to him ; and he thought
"Love first was cruel and now Love is kind."

Thereat Priyamvada "Write to the king
A love-note that he may take pity on thee;
Gentle was his speech ; he seemed merciful ;
Kind spirit needs must dwell in that fair form."
And Anusuya said "Aye " ; Sakuntala
Awhile kept still, e'en by a bashful smile
Giving consent. Thereafter she thus spake
"Were he to chide this madness of my fancy ?"
Priyamvada resumed "What man on earth
Shall fly from off the splendour of the moon ?
Thou little knowest thine own worth." With this
She offered her a broad green lotus-leaf
Fresh from a neighb'ring lake, whereon to write.
Awhile Sakuntala paused in still mood
Fixed in thought ; while from behind the bower
Dushyanta with still eyes beheld the maid.
Such grace beamed from her countenance, her thoughts
Seemed featured on her face, her thoughts of him
She loved, as they rose crowding in her mind.
Then she with her soft nails upon the leaf
Wrote all the purpose of her heart and thus
To her dear mates read out with gentle voice.

Idylls of Ancient Ind

'Ah me, I know not what thy heart may feel,
Love in my bosom whispers with one voice,
Thou art the ocean, I a seaward stream.'

At this Dushyanta stepped into the bower,
For better proof of love he needed none.
And e'en as with trembling hand she held the leaf,
Whereon her love-tale featured was, he thus

'Nay, tender maiden, like the chaste bright moon,
Whose splendour heaves the bosom of the sea,
Thou shinest fair and all my heart is full.'

Whereat they rose, her mates; and glad at heart
Were they; and from her couch Sakuntala
Rose also, while from her hand the leaf fell.
And without further ceremony, the king
With them sat on a side of that soft couch,
Whereon Sakuntala lay all the while;
And they, her mates, then spake to Dushyanta
That he might make Sakuntala his queen.
And when they knew the king was of their mind,
They left the bower. Alone Sakuntala
Was with the king; a deathless love he swore
To her and said "Sole delight of my heart,
Or ever thou art mine in weal or woe."

And she to him "I yield my heart and all
To thee, my lord; thy partner be in grief
And joy and follow thee in the wide world
Ever true to thee in thought and deed
And utterance." And in that hour they were wed;
Birds sang hymeneal hymns, while the river
With the music of its ever rippling wave,
And the shrill wind blowing over reedy banks,
And the high woods with trembling foliage,
Seemed to breathe their blessings on them both.
And e'en as she lay upon the flowery couch,
Beneath the bower, wan, weary, yet beautiful,
Dushyanta on her soft fair finger placed
The ring, he wore, in token of his love.
And there of many happy things talked they.
A fawn came bounding to the bower; fatigue
Weighed on its limbs, hot noon had quickened thirst;
Panting it came. Dushyanta held to the fawn
Some water that the fawn might slake its thirst;
But to the king it came not; stranger he seemed
To the wood. But when Sakuntala held forth,
In the hollow of her hand, offering drink,
E'en to her it came and drank. "Of one household
Ye are," said he "the fawn knows thee of its kind."
So in the cool green bower they spent the noon,

So delighted they each other and fulfilled
 Those tender offices of connubial love.
 Till day went fading behind the circling hills;
 And stars, night's shining minstrels, gathered forth
 In twilight-mantled skies innumerable;
 And glow-worms waking sparkled in the copse.
 Priyamvada thereat thought in her mind
 Of Sakuntala lingering in the bower;
 And mindful of the hour, turned to a lake,
 On whose side a chakravaka-pair sat making
 Love all day long, and in maiden sport addressed.

' O cease, fond pair, from ecstasy of love,
 All the bland rapture, all the sweet caress;
 No more the bright day shines on field and flower,
 And night comes darkening all the heavens and hills.'

Sakuntala heard what she spake and knew
 The hour she was wont to be at the hermitage.
 All the noon was she with her lord in the bower.
 They parted; Sakuntala to her maids,
 That waited her, unwilling tho' to part,
 On the morrow, promising, in the self-same bower
 To meet the king; Dushyanta, as she passed
 Beneath the stately trees to the hermitage, [flowers
 stood watching. Then he turned to the bower; the

Whereon she lay, the leaf that on it bore
Expression of her love, the long lotus-stalks
That coiled round her limbs, he saw; and sighing,
He left the bower, longing in his heart
To meet her on the morrow. And thro' the days
That followed, many a time in the shady bower
They met and many a time parted. Then he,
The graver duties of the realm remembering,
Dushyanta, took fond leave of her; in tears
They parted and with heavy hearts. And her
He cheered in her grief and said "Here stay,
And ere three days, forth from my court shall come
The bravest of my horsemen, proved in war,
And by me charged, to take thee thro' the woods
Safe to my capital." With this he left
Sakuntala, e'en as still grief choked her,
And followed by his huntsmen took his way
To Hastinapur beyond the woods afar.

That very day he left the hermitage,
Came Kanwa; him told Gautumi with joy
The marriage of Sakuntala with the king,
And all that passed between them. He rejoiced
For she was wed to a worthy lord and one
Who would treat her with all love and gentleness.

In her eyes a light he saw and on her face
The wan pale languor of coming motherhood.
"To-morrow thou wilt leave" said he to her
"This hermitage for Hastinapur, where
Thy lord resides" and she was glad. And he
Then ordered all things for her going. And ere
The appointed morn lighted the woods he rose;
And forth to Malinee he paced and bathed;
And after prayer returned; and returning saw
The wan moon, sinking behind the chained hills,
Paled by the growing light of the blushing sun.
And in his mind he thought "These orbs of light,
Perchance, like shining symbols of the gods,
Setting and rising, speak to all the world
The story of human life, that is ne'er alike
At all times but is ever-changing, wrought
With sorrow and with joy, darkening
And brightening its period by turns."
So thought he and passed by the margin of a lake
Fringed with wild blue water-lilies wan,
That drooped upon its ripples languidly
With folded petals, mourning for the absent moon,
In whose bright presence it was their use to bloom.
(So fares the maid longing for her absent lord.)
He reached the hermitage; and as he reached. . .

Grief filled his heart and wakened sighs that choked
His voice ; and tears came gushing in his eyes.
Dear was she to him, dear as child.
One morn returning from the woods he saw
The child upon the sward alone and fair
And nursed by kind sakunta birds ; and her
He took to his hermitage and brought her up
And there she lived and grew to maiden ; she
Loved Kanwa as her father and her virtue
Gladdened him. That morn she was to leave
His home for Hastinapur whither stayed
Her lord ; and the thought and all the anguish held
Him sorrow-bound. He reached the hermitage
To bless her and to send her to her lord.

But while upon the banks of Malinee
He stayed, strange things had come to pass. Her mates
Were busy gathering flowers. Sakuntala
Stayed in the hermitage, lost in sweet thoughts ;
Dreaming she lay of the king and of his love
To her. Then came Durvasa, famed of old,
To the hermitage and called. Sakuntala
Heard not the sage ; her heart was elsewhere
And other accents lingered in her ears.
And e'en her mates came not, for she would tend,

They thought, the guests that came, as was her wont.
The sage was wroth ; and like a wounded snake,
Darting from its coil in crested pride,
Pours sudden vengeance from its burning fangs,
Durvasa fared and from his trembling lips
Such cruel accents fell. "Of haughty mien
O thou, that lightly thinkest thus of me,
A cloud shall darken all his memory
On whom thy idle thoughts thou pourest now ;
To him thy name and all shall strangers be
And in his mind all thought of thee shall die."
So cursed and left the hermitage ; and she
Heard not. Her mates heard all he said ; they knew
She was in a trance, her thoughts were with the king
And he was far away. Priyamvada
Then hurried to the angry sage and begged
Of him to pardon her. "Forgive" said she
To him "forgiveness marks all natures noble."
With such meek voice she spake and tenderness,
While in her eyes came tears, her accents wrought
Mercy in his stern flint-like heart and he
Thus said "Go ; some love-token by him given
Be shown to him, he will know her." And passed on.
To Anusuya she returned and told
Her all and they spake nought of it to her

That lay dreaming ; none knew it but the two.

Now to the hermitage came Kanwa, and he
Upon the altar lighted the holy fire ;
And bright it blazed. Sakuntala paced round
The altar ; all the while in her heart she prayed
For His blessing on her lord. The noble sage,
On whose high forehead age wrought wrinkles deep
Of grey wisdom, then began " May the goodly fire,
Holy with sacrificial balm, keep ye
Ever pure." Then all the matrons of the place
Their many blessings spake : " Of him beloved,
A worthy consort be ;" " A righteous king,
Thy son may rule ;" " The foremost of the race
Of warrior-kings may he endure and live
The prince of men and bless the land ;" " Thy lord
Hold thee in his heart trusted and ever dear."
They ended ; Kanwa with a father's care
Sakuntala counselled thus " Revere
Thy elders ; follow thy lord as shadow doth
The substance, ever patient and at his will ;
And filled with the honey of human tenderness,
Bear with all ; nor let high power and wealth
Inflame thy heart with pride and lust ; e'er love
Thy lord and to thyself be true ; in him

Thy joy and peace, in him thy weal and stay ;
In adversity's bitter hour not yield
To preying grief a victim nor exult
When fortune smiles. So mayest thou live beloved
Of gods and men ; so in the world's memory
Thy name may endure and in days to be
May all men say 'She was pure, a blameless life
She lived, noble was she and true to all,
Sakuntala, the flower of womankind.'"
She heard and in her mind made firm resolve
To fulfil the purpose of her godlike sire.
Then robed Sakuntala in flowing silk,
Like summer cloudlets white or virgin snow,
Wrought by the sylvan nymphs that gave it her,
And in radiant ruby, orient pearl, and gold ;
Lovelier she than when fresh from the foam
Of Paphian waters rose, bright-eyed, and paced,
On flowery sward embalmed with fragrant dew,
Slender, virgin-graced, divinely beautiful, [heavens,
While morn kindled new light in the azure o' the
The fair Cytheria midst Idalian bowers,
New-bathed, 'neath sheets of shaded hyacinth.
Meantime in numbers at the hermitage
Had gathered Kanwa's pupils ; one and all
They came to bid Sakuntala farewell.

Sakuntala was Kanwa's foster-child,
And they revered him as their sire ; so loved
They her and she loved them as children love
Each other of one home. Kanwa thereat
Turned to the two, the boldest and the best
Of all the host, by him appointed
To lead Sakuntala on to the king ;
And thus addressed " To Dushyanta bear ye
This message with my blessings on the king.
Say ' Kanwa speaks to ye, lord of the land,
Kanwa, who knows ye righteous and benign,
Accept Sakuntala as queen and wife,
Sakuntala, the fond self-chosen bride,
Sakuntala, the delight of my hermitage ;
And treat her worthy of the love ye bear
To her. ' " He said and the two heard and bowed,
Each with his hands, close palm to palm, in sign
Of willing obedience to the sage's words.

Sakuntala then cast a lingering glance
Upon the trees of the hermitage ; so dear
Were they to her : her thirst she ne'er did quench
Ere with cooling drink their trenches she had filled ;
Nor nipped the slender tendril from the stalk
To dight herself, tho' fond of ornament ;

And in the blowing season, when from the bough
Hung flowers, the rathe heralds of coming spring,
Joy filled her heart. And as she said "Farewell,
Ye trees of the hermitage, ye antelopes,
And birds, my delight in these woods, farewell,"
A wind went sighing thro' the leaves making
Low moan; one solitary kokil sang
A plaintive consent giving; and the deer
Stayed to chew the cud, touched with deep grief;
And the peacock ceased its dance; and from the trees
Fell many a flower and leaf as tho' they wept.
Sakuntala spake to her mates with tears
Of the bakul and 'the moonlight of the grove,'
So late the objects of her tender care;
To Kanwa turning thus "When yon she-deer [turned,
Brings forth, send word" she said. And as she
She saw close at her feet the little fawn
She knew so well; motherless while young it grew
Under her kind care; and when in sportive mood
It ventured beyond its wont and bleeding came
To the hermitage, she dressed the wound from day
To day with the balm of pressed ingudi,
And ne'er was happy till the wound was healed.
It was the self-same fawn that came to her
Fatigued and panting, while with Dushyanta

She stayed in the bower, wan, weary, yet beautiful.
She saw the fawn and all her eyes were full.
She took the fawn in her trembling hands and kissed ;
And to Kanwa's care entrusting let it go.

They started, Sakuntala and the two
By Kanwa appointed, and Gautumi ;
While Kanwa and her mates but followed her
To the lake beyond the limit of the wood.
And as they came, a chakravaki sang
In bitter grief : a wind had fanned between
Her and her mate a lotus leaf that floated
On the bosom of the lake ; and him
Not seeing the fond chakravaki wailed.
The plaintive wailing touched the gentle heart
Of Sakuntala and her mates cheered her :
“ Even so the chakravaki all night long
Mourns her absent lord ; hope binds the hearts
Of lovers stronger than all earthly ties ;
And love grows double, but parted for a time.”

But now with blinding splendour high advanced
Bright noon and cast its glory upon the hills.
Sakuntala took leave of her dear mates
With tearful eyes ; and they spake not ; grief filled

Their hearts and choked their voice. The happy past
Like a golden vision flashed before their eyes :
The hermitage, and garden plots, and the still banks
Of Malinee crowned with bowery shade,
And the breezy woodland, and the cool green nooks,
And fawns, and flowers, and all the lone delight.
Then Anusuya spake " If the king forget
Thee and all his love for thee, then show the ring,
That on it bears his name, and he will know thee."
Trembling Sakuntala listened, whereat
Priyamvada " Fear not ; so gently burns
In the heart love's flame and flickers at e'ery gust."
Sakuntala to Kanwa turned ; in tears
She burst ; speech failed her and all her thankful heart
Went sighing in still pause ; for gratitude
Stronger than all human passions robs
The heart of expression and quivering lip
And tearful eye betray the feeling. Kanwa
Spake to her, himself all sorrow-stricken,
" Soon from thy memory this grief will fade,
This parting anguish, and other thoughts in turn
Wakening in thy bosom claim thy care :
Thoughts of a loving wife, queen to the lord
Of all the land, thoughts of a loving mother
Happy with a tender babe in thy arms,

Tender as the blushing sun at prime,
A babe of golden promise and the sire
Of kings to be. To me in the hermitage
These woodland flowers and these antelopes
Will ever of thy living presence speak.
In after years when thy son, new-crowned, will bear
The mighty yoke of empire, with thy lord
Then mayest thou to this hermitage return
In peace among these lonely woods to dwell."
He thus ; and pointing to the path that led
To Hastinapur's walls, whispered "farewell."
She started ; Kanwa and her mates stood long
Watching till behind the trees she disappeared.
And they back to the hermitage returned :
Kanwa, his heart comforted by the thought
His duty to the child he found in the woods
Was all fulfilled, and her mates to whose eyes seemed
All the hermitage deserted and alone.

Thro' all the day they travelled under shade,
The four, cheered by the cool fresh breeze that blew
From o'er field and meadow ; and when the sun
Dropped behind the purpled hills, and birds
Hurrying to their nests with jocund songs
Proclaimed the hour of eve, they halted all

At a wayside-inn and there they spent the night.
And ere the day quenched all the fading stars,
They started and with quickened steps walked on.
Before them and nigh Hastinapur's walls
Lay Sacheeteertha, placid-rippling lake
Between wide waving fields of golden green.
It was the sacred haunt of Peris fair
That graced the mighty Indra's court ; and oft
By starlight, or by moonlight, or ere dawn,
They came and sported in the lovely lake.
And as they came e'en to its very shores,
A wind blew on the sleeping buds and broke
Them into flowers that lent their fragrance sweet
To all the place ; such is the charm that dwells
With beings that are of the ethereal realms.
None saw them while they came yet all believed.
Only reapers, reaping in the fields
Early while yet dawn lurks behind the hills,
Hear a song and whisper as they hear
" Sweet like the song of sylvan nymphs it comes."
Oft times the lated ploughman with his plough,
Returning weary from the noonday toil,
Sees from afar a blaze of golden light
Upon the lake and hastens to his home
To repeat to all the wond'ring folk his tale

And the splendour of the vision that he saw,
Or some lone passing villager, who sings
To forget the toil of the way that winds
Between the fields, suspends his rustic rhyme
And marks with deep delight the gentle sounds
That come from o'er the fields and the chime of bells
As on they lead their moonlight-dance in joy ;
And all his heart then gladdens as he goes,
' Neath the calm moonlight, by the floating shade
Of wayside trees to reach a neighb'ring village
Ere morrow-morn. Hither, when the birds
Of prime made melody and dewy morn
In jewelled splendour clad the woodlands all,
With faces cheerful as the morn they came,
And stayed beneath the stately trees that grew
Upon its banks: cool bowers and shady groves
By the mossy brink, made vocal all day long
By the warbling tenants of the place; they saw
On the brink, where the little ripples of the lake
Kissed the shore, the silver lily smiled ;
And purple violets blowed upon the bank ;
And lotus blooms, broad-petalled, breathed perfume.
Some blushing as the rosy-mantled morn,
Some golden-petalled as the clouds of eve,
Some passing fair in color virgin pearl,

Idylls of Ancient Ind

And all sweet in their native loveliness,
In gay confusion scattered smiled in bloom
And floated on the bosom of the lake
And rose and fell on the ripples as they came.

They bathed in the limpid waters of the lake
Made balmy by the wind-blown dust of blooms ;
And prayed and after prayer they took their meal,
Simple and sweet, and quaffed of a neighb'ring spring
Cool water and refreshed were they. But she,
The fair Sakuntala, had other thoughts :
Thoughts of her departed lord, his love
For her, pure tender and devoted love,
Thoughts of him whom she would meet once more
And meeting bless her eyes and weep for joy.
Such hopeful prospect vision'd before her ; she longed
To join him. "O he would know me" thought
Sakuntala and trembled as the thought,
She knew not why, " and I would love him too
And he would love me as he loved me when
In my forest-home he stole my heart from me ;
Aye, he is mine." So fancying she turned
To where the lotus in its maiden charm
Blushed in its fullest bloom ; and turning, soft
With her fingers, tender as the tender flowers,

She nipped some few. And as she nipped them, soft
From her finger slipped the ring into the lake :
That very ring by him so fondly placed
On her finger while he was by her side and she
Reclining lay upon the flowery couch
Beneath the bower, wan, weary, yet beautiful.
She knew not that it slipped into the lake ;
Her whole heart was busy gathering choicest flowers
From the lake ; she culled the fairest blooms that
 blowed
Upon the bank and in the neighb'ring fields ;
And with the flowers a wreath she made ; and fair
It smiled and bland with sweet amorous art.

And ere the hour of noon they left the place
For Hastinapur nigh beyond the wood,
Sakuntala in her hand the wreath, and passed
Thro' balmy-breathing pathways of the wood
And many winding vocal avenues ;
And reached the limit of the wood, when lo,
Far off they saw a blaze that burned as noon,
Far off they heard a voice as of the sea :
A blaze that gladdened all their hearts, a voice
That whispered peace ; they knew the city-walls
Were nigh and all the majestic river rolling.

And as they neared, the city with its spires
Of columned marble, white as spotless snow,
Tall, golden-domed, flashed in the light of noon,
As when the stately pinnacles of Himalay,
All thronging in the high azure of the heavens,
Bathed in noontide splendour sparkle afar.
With quickened pace advancing they reached the city
Girt by massive walls ; high bulwarks they
That for many an age had baffled the heart
Of many a stoutest foe. To the gate they came ;
O'erhead the adamantine archway hung,
Bearing the blazoned emblem of the king,
On tall pillars colossal ; and below
Were stationed iron-clad sentinels that kept
Strict watch thro' all the hours. Them the sentinels
Suspected not ; permitted, the city-gate
They entered and such wonder seized them, they
In mute astonishment the royal highway
Passed ; on either side stood stately mansions
Reaching to the skies ; and all between
With stir and sound in diverse currents rolled
The ever-flowing stream of busy folk.
The sight chilled their hearts ; but utter strangers they
To all such grandeur. The dwellers of the woods,
They knew but the hermitages and few folk,

Not Hastinapur, the wonder of the world,
Mightier than Troy's windy citadel
Or many-towered Ilium. In her heart
"Blessed is my lord ; of all this country
Is my lord the king " thought Sakuntala,
The happy cynosure of passing eyes.
They reached the palace of the king and straight
Admission gained ; such charm had Kanwa's name,
Kanwa, the austere sage, known to the king,
By Dushyanta revered and thro' all the land.

They passed to the presence of the king thro' halls
Adorned with sandle and with ivory,
Palatial chambers, tapestried with gold
And finest silk of many a hue inwoven,
And hung with arches fringed on either side
With ornament and starred with jasper, pearl,
And ocean-coral and hyacinth bright.
They reached the garden whither stayed the king ;
On a wide seat of veined marble made,
Whereon was smeared the cool Malayan crease,
Fatigued, his duty for the day all done,
He sate. On one side lay the ferns and flowers
Fresh in the plots, washed with the dewy spray
That spilt upon them from a neighb'ring fount

That played its crystal dance in a basin wide
Of alabaster rimmed with chrysolite
And sparkling aventurine ; and on the other
Hung a golden cage wherein a salunkhi
The noonday ditty poured. And as the king
Eyed the splashing fountain and the swans,
That rested, close-eyed, shunning the heat of noon,
Beneath the broad green lotus-leaves that fanned
Cool air, he heard a song that came upon
Him from among the stately palace-towers,
Sweet-voiced, sung by them appointed
To cheer the sovereign thro' the weary hours.

'The sun ne'er stays his journey in the heavens ;
On land and sea the wind incessant blows ;
So dutious ye, the monarch of the world,
Alike in glory and in sovereign power.'

At this they came ; due reverence made Dushyanta,
And he was told they were of Kanwa's home.
Then spake the elder of the pupils thus,
Śarangarava, more courteous of the two,
'Hail king, that rulest for the people's weal,
Feeless of self-pleasure, as the banyan
High-crested shuns the burning heat of noon

Offering shade, long live and rule the land."
The other, Saradvata bold, addressed
The king "As the fruit-tree goodly laden bows
To the ground or as the winter-cloud surcharged
Landward hangs, thy power with humility
Wedded is sober-veiled: humility
The divine heritage of noble few."
Whereat Dushyanta asked them if all things
Fared well with them in the woods; and they said
"Aye."

Then Sarangarava began "This message sends
Sage Kanwa, with his blessings to the king:
'Accept Sakuntala as queen and wife,
Sakuntala, the fond self-chosen bride,
Sakuntala, the delight of my hermitage;
And treat her worthy of the love ye bear
To her.' And here, O king, she stands; accept
Sakuntala that we may go and speak
To Kanwa that the charge we have fulfilled
By him entrusted to our care." The king
Beheld Sakuntala and but knew her
As tho' she were a vision in the dream,
No stranger yet a vision; from his mind
All memory of her, his love for her,
Yea her very name had passed away.

He saw and to his eyes familiar seemed
The stately figure faintly trembling; him
All recollection failed: such darkness wrought
The fell Durvasa's curse upon his mind.
Awhile he spake not; then resumed "Strange news
Ye bring to me; what sudden affair this?"
Fear seized her as she listened to the words.
Then Gautumi to Sakuntala spake
"Unveil thy face, the kind lord may know thee then."
So did Sakuntala. As when the moon
Bright shines, the obscuring clouds swept by the winds,
So shone the moon of beauty, Sakuntala,
When the dim veil slipt from her face. The king
Knew not if he had wed Sakuntala;
And spake he thus to her "I know thee not,
Fair stranger, nor made I e'er thee my queen."
Whereat she spake, she trembled all with fear,
Great king, it ill becomes ye speak thus harsh;
The sovereign is the beacon-light, they say,
Of virtue to all the land; even this bright ring
I gave in token of your love to me."
On saying she, in act to draw the ring
From off her finger, found it not. Dismayed
She turned to Gautumi who thus "Perchance
The ring had slipt in Sacheeteertha." She,

The vexed Sakuntala, resumed "O hear
Me speak, great king, fell fortune works thus on;
That noon when in the green bower I reclined
Upon the flowers and ye beside me sate,
A fawn came and ye offered drink; the fawn
Drank not: to the fawn strange seemed your royal guise;
But coming, pressed e'en to my side and drank
When I held forth in the hollow of my hand
Cool drink. Delighted then, did ye not say
'The fawn knows thee of its kind; of one household
Ye are?' The echo of that loving voice
Still lingers in my ear and all that love
Yet fills my heart and oft doth overflow."

Then he, strange seemed to him the tale, thus spake
"O woman's heart is venomful, her speech
Tho' honey-like has in it dark poison
Concealed which burns and in the horrid flame
Men rush like moths and die ignoble death.
So ne'er did any king of Puru-race."
Thereat old Gautumi her courage summoned
And thus with accents bold replied "Know, king,
We live with the sages of thy land that love
Nought save truth, charity, and righteousness;
Nor to our homes doth fraud e'en access find,

And falsehood in those woods can never dwell."
Sakuntala had never known the pang
Of bitter anguish and keen disappointment;
And conscious of no guilt, by innocence
Made bold and love of truth, she thus poured out
The sadness of her heart "Doth not a voice,
More mighty than your tongue can utter, speak
To ye in your heart of the guilt? Belic not truth,
The holy symbol of God's nature; truth
Shines brighter than the sun and hath more power
Than earthly kings and will outlive the age
Of thousand worlds." And such high eloquence
Thrilled thro' her voice, and where the voice failed,
Such tears rained down her reddened cheeks, the king
Thought in his mind "What may this be, or falsehood
That wears the mantle of truth or righteous wrath?
Truth needs must dwell in such Beauty's shrine;
Yet how bends she her brows, as tho' Love's arch
Had broke, and seems to send thro' tearful eyes
Keen shafts to quell my bosom; nay, fair form,
I shall not yield." Then spake aloud the king,
His memory darkened by the fell curse, "Away,
Seek not to give the lie the native hue
Of truth; I cannot trust thou knowest me,
I know thee not." Then Saradvata spake

"Come, we will to the sage and say 'we led
Sakuntala to the king.'" To Dushyanta
He turned and thus "She is your wife and true;
Accept or not and treat her as ye will."
With this, from the presence of the king they started;
Alone stood Sakuntala and weeping trembled,
And trembling followed them few steps and spake
To them "The heartless king hath played me false;
More cruel ye if ye will leave me thus."
Then Sarangarava in a shrill loud voice
Returned "If thou art, as the king asserts,
Not his true-wedded wife, think'st thou to find
In Kanwa's hermitage a home? Vain hope;
Yet if thy heart is free from taint of guilt,
Then serve thy lord, tho' in humble wise; obey
His word; he hath more power o'er thee than thou
Can'st think of; follow not our steps but stay."
His accents bold such stern command implied,
Sakuntala o'erpowered stood; and they
With hurried steps passed on. The noon was spent
And the day declining faded and the night
With dews came on, as tho' the earth wept still,
And with the pale moon in the skies and the stars
Dimly twinkling. She bewailed her fate.
Once to the king she turned with tearful eyes,

But spake not: sorrow choked her voice; too deep
With grief her bosom, she in silence sighed;
And all her noble heart with profound despair
Too full for expression heaved faint. The king
Veiled with his hand his eyes; the bitter sight
Wrought pity in his kindly heart and urged
A faint sigh and a tear. Tho' merciful
The lord of Hastinapur, yet the king
Could not accept her his true-wedded wife.
The cursed gloom fell on him and he sate
As tho' spell-bound; void was his memory
Of all that tender love he bore to her.

Sakuntala bowed down her troubled head;
The plight weighed on her sorrow-burdened soul;
And noble shame e'ery moment waxed her woe.
Then she with deep regret thus murmured faint
'O mother earth, O dear mother earth,
Can'st thou not in thy deep wide bosom find
One spot, where all my weary soul may weep
The burden of its sorrow; one lone spot, [pang,
One kind lone spot, where my heart vexed with the
The bitter pang of disappointed love,
May bury all its worldly wrongs; one spot,
One dark spot, far from life's great weariness,

Where I may rest and all my sufferings end?"
She said and ere the wan faint voice faded
Upon her dry lips, there was heard a sound,
Deep as of a coming storm, and lo,
A light flashed in the skies ; a splendour quenched
The pale moon and the many twinkling stars.
A form came swimming in the light to the earth
Where stood Sakuntala ; such glory curled
About the form and beaming halo blazed
With excess, none knew what passed. Sakuntala,
Alone of all that gazing folk, well knew
Her divine mother Menaka was come.
And ere the king fixed on them both his gaze,
She with one arm snatched Sakuntala weeping
And rose on radiant wings and wheeled beyond
The clouds to where on high Hímalay's slope
Lay the habitation of the mighty gods.
The king wondered and all Hastinapur's folk
At the bright vision that vanished from their eyes.
Then the moon and all the stars shone visible ;
And night advancing, he retired to sleep,
While gentle strains of music lulled his ear.
But some vague unrest lingered in his heart ;
And he slept dreaming of Sakuntala,
By him denied, and the glory of the form,

That vanished, and all the wonder and the light.

[throne

Next morn, when the bright sun from the orient
Streamed thro' the breezy palace-walks and bathed
The many stately-rising city towers
In crimson and in gold, Dushyanta rose ;
A mystic expression dwelt in his eyes,
His heart was weary and his face was wan.
Beauty, that dwells with joy, and music sweet,
Affording true delight, yet wrought in him
A heart-pang, yea an aching of the soul,
Such as remind it of a life that was ;
Sakuntala, a stranger tho' she seemed
To his curse-clouded mind, was perfection,
Like to a goddess past all earthly grace ;
His eyes had seen her and his ears had heard
The music of her voice. A languor weighed
Upon him and divine melancholy
Dim veiled. But the duty of the mighty realm,
Whereof he was the king, suppressed his heart.
At the bitterness grew day by day ; one year
Thus spent the king in despondency sunk
At duty-bound.

And one year rolled away

And the new year smiled and clothed the fields in green.
But to the king it was a year of woe.
One noon, one summer noon, while 'neath the shade
Of cool green bowers, Dushyanta lingered lone,
Came sudden an attendant and thus spake
"O lord, this jewel take, a fisherman
That by yon Sachecteertha dwells did find
In the bowels of a ruby-tinted fish
That caught his cruel bait ; and when the wretch
To Hastinapur came, intent to sell
What he ne'er knew, they bound him hand and foot
And such have brought him and do wait without
The palace ; poverty, not greed for gold,
Did urge such action." Saying this he gave
The bright jewel to the king who thus "Nay, free
The fisherman and his great kindness be
Repaid with ample gold." Dushyanta saw
The ring, that sparkled as a radiant star,
Whereon was chiselled the emblem of royalty
And which in jewelled letters bore his name.
Then flashed thro' all his clouded memory
A light, like lightning, and made clear the dark
That invested his thought. It was the ring
He placed upon her soft fair finger, while
He sate beside Sakuntala and she

Reclining lay upon a flowery bed
Beneath the bower, wan weary, yet beautiful.
The chase, and the antelope that shunned his shaft,
And the sage who with a voice prophetic-bold
Blest him with a son, one who would reign
In aftertime a righteous king and rule
An empire stretching vast from sea to sea,
And the solitary banks of Malinee,
And the hermitage with the charm of fawns and flowers,
Sakuntala, her comrades, and the bee,
The happy noon, the noonday bower, the ring
He placed on her finger, and the fawn that came
All wearied to the bower, his word to make
Her his beloved queen, the sad farewell
And the tears, passed like a vision 'fore his sight.
And the king sighed and all his noble soul
Vept grief; compassion for Sakuntala,
His true-wedded wife, by him denied when she
'leaded in innocence his love for her,
illed all his heart; that he denied the truth
/rought shame in him; he knew not that the curse
ad clouded his memory. Yet thro' the days
hat followed he in silence mourned her fate,
ie, in whose face the promise of an heir
one bright and in whose eyes dwelt chastity.

Alone the king to the palace-park retired
And 'neath its shade his heart's great burden wept
Unseen, till all his grief took shape. Nought pleased
Him save to dwell upon the beauty bright,
That graced Sakuntala, her happy life
In the lonely woods, and all her love for him.
Then in glowing hues a likeness wrought the king
Of Sakuntala as when about her flew
The bee in the garden by the hermitage :
She, staying by the jasmine that she loved,
One slender arm uplifted the bee to shun
And with the other held the pot whereof
She poured the crystal wetting e'ery leaf
And flower ; and clad in bark, her tresses loose,
Whereon the winds of heaven played, she stood
Like to woodland nymph ; while from her ear
The soft sireesha hung half withering ;
And round her creamy neck and all between
Her faintly heaving breasts, a filament,
Pale as the summer moonbeam, went half-veiled,
Wrought from the fabric of the lotus-stem ;
Her mates not far from her, she blushing fair,
A flower of beauty and a shrine of grace ;
On one side lay the modest hermitage
Of Kanwa, and, on the other, Malinee

Her waters rippled between white flats of sand,
Sought by the swans of the woodland ; on the green-
banks

Stood many a world-old tree, its branches hung
With mantled bark ; and 'neath the windy shade,
The she-deer on the antlers of her mate,
Lying upon the sward, her left eye faintly
Rubbed, pleased with the touch. Such perfection
Glowed thro' the hues and such life dwelt therein,
It seemed as tho' Love's self had snatched the brush
From the king and fixed in colors all the loveliness
Of Sakuntala, the sole queen of all his heart.
Thereafter he in tears sore homage paid
To her whom he had wronged ; and day by day
He mourning languished in distress ; and oft
He still poured out the sadness of his soul.

Thus while upon a day of spring, he sate
At prime, ere morn had jewelled all the sward,
Nest by the fount of alabaster, touched
With deep woe, and burst in plaintive utterance,
In Sanumati's ears the faint voice fell,
Sanumati, one of the sisterhood
Of Menaka, that dwelt upon the heights
Of windy Himalay ; by nature formed

Angelic, able to hear all gentle sounds,
She, passing by the garden of the king
To Sacheeteertha between golden fields,
Heard in her flight low notes of grief that came
Like sighs upon the wind ; and wondering,
The garden entered ; softly on the sward,
Dewy, she paced glistening in the light of morn.
On either side bloomed flowers of fair hues,
Each cherub-like and with a tale its own :
Plots of champak, parterres of rose,
And silver lily and chaste jessamine.
She reached the fount and saw the stricken king ;
The likeness of Sakuntala before
Him hung and he in tears beside it sate,
Half in a trance ; yet thro' the cloud of sadness
Shone the majesty that nought could veil.
She saw the likeness and the king and straight
Knew him Dushyanta, Sakuntala's lord,
For whom she mourned in silence on the hills.
Strong feeling urged her and beside the king
She stood unseen, of substance invisible
So made ; she knew not that the king did weep
For the chaste Sakuntala whom he had wronged.
And as beside the alabaster fountain
Sanumati stayed intent to hear,

Dushyanta burst in utterance sorrowful.

‘Ah cruel night, that pressed me with cold sleep,
What time she spake of all that happy love
The darkness fades, chased by the light of day,
And all my heart doth waken now with woe.’

Then flashed upon his mind the memory
Of Sakuntala’s plight when she, in act
While following the pupils and old Gautumi,
By him denied, by them compelled to stay
With stern command, cast at the king in tears
Glances able to melt e’en stony hearts ;
So much had keen remorse wrought in his bosom
Sorrow, that no bliss could quell, he thus

‘And those long glances, noble with despair,
From wan eyes dimmed with bitter bitter tears,
Do prick me like dark venom-crested shafts
And vex my heart and sadden all my soul.’

His word to take her thro’ the stately woods
‘o Hastinapur, ere the sun did thrice
Vaken from behind the wooded hills,
The farewell word, which he did ne’er fulfil,
Non haunted his troubled mind ; ere long
He jewelled ring his mourning fancy took,

The same which he once fondly placed upon
Her finger, while she lay beneath the bower
Reclining, wan, weary, yet beautiful,
And filled with love angelic pure ; and he
Beside her sate. The thought chilled him and thus
The melancholy of his soul took shape.

‘Happier thy lot, fond ring, wert thou to stay
On her fair warm finger tenderer than the dawn ;
Say, say, what passion blind thee urged to slip
Into the dark cold bosom of the lake.’

And ere some moments chid himself and wailed.

‘Ah lifeless thing, it knew not love’s kind warmth,
No flame burnt glowing in its cold cold bourne ;
Woe me, cold, cold, unkind, she seemed not mine,
E’en while the truth she pleaded all in tears.’

Then all his fancy on the likeness dwelt ;
What time to his love-languid eyes it glowed
Fraught with life. Dushyanta to the bee,
That seemed in act to wheel about her face,
Touched with pity, thus in kind words spake.

‘O cease, kind bee, to err ; to err is vain ;
Beauty dwells not wholly in the bloom ;
Her face more lovely than the fairest flower
Doth charm and ravish all thy erring eye.’

He said, still seemed the bee to wheel. Then he,
Seeing the bee lacked true obedience
To his royal word, was wroth ; and thus spake loud
" False thief, touch but the blossom of her lip,
Wherein is stored the honey of love and life,
And thou shalt in the chambered lotus stay
Ere long confined." Fond king, he never knew
He spake to what seemed life in painted hues.
At this a wind blew in the garden and shook
The lofty trees ; and from the foliage
And from the petals of the prime-blown flowers
Rained dew, in fellowship of kindred grief ;
The likeness of Sakuntala, that hung
Before the king, by slender chains bound fast,
Pressed by the wind, slipped from the knot and
dropped ;
And from his eyes a burning stream of tears.
He sighed ; and his vexed thought expression found.

'Lo-cruel wind, why press my aching soul
While yet my fancy quaffed the founts of joy ?
Methought the heart's bright flame stole on her cheek
And in the maiden blush love seemed more fair.'

To Sanumati's eyes, the likeness seemed,
As to the king's, pregnant with life's warm fire.

And when the likeness dropped upon the sword,
The disappointment and all the grief
With Dushyanta she shared ; he all the while,
Like one, from Nature's ample vista led
Thro' error into nothing, charmed with the hues
Of mirage, fared. Then he thus vexed with sadness
Spake, while tears of remorse filled his orbs.

“ Kind sleep, yet feed me on with golden dreams,
That her in slumbers I may meet and love ;
And tears, O ye of woe, blind not my eyes
That I may love e'en her in hues and die.”

So all the killing passion of remorse
Blasted the flower of his noble life ;
And he, while *Sanumati* stood watching,
Fainted and from the seat the monarch fell.
With woman's kindness *Sanumati* heard
The tale of *Sakuntala's* love and woe ;
Her eyes bedimmed with tears of pity, she
To her far home hurried on burnished wings
Intent to tell *Dushyanta's* sorrowing queen
Of all the misery that troubled her lord.

Thereafter *Dushyanta*, from week to week
By cooling balsams nursed in time regained

Freshness native to wholesome health ; still lurked
In him the melancholy that on his face
Cast the hue of languor. Yet the king
The duties of the mighty realm resumed.
While thus he fared, one noon came Matali,
Great Indra's charioteer, and thus spake
To Dushyanta the mandate of his lord :
" Most mighty archer, Indra seeks your aid
In battle with the Rakshasas, that now,
To despair flamed with dark revengeful ire,
Have risen after years of infamy
And foul defeat to wage war with the gods.
The prowess of your arm can quell them all ;
For when the first twang of your bow is heard,
No foe in all the field but falls. O come
And claim the meed of valour : victory
O'er foes, and in battle glory without end. "
The king accepted after a moment's pause
Kind welcome to the region of the gods ;
For one great purpose worthy of true praise
Raged e'en like a passion in the hearts
Of warrior-kings of Ind : in righteousness
To rule and e'er in battle to excel.

Then in the chariot he sate, all robed

In mail and armed for battle. Up rose the car
And faster than the sunbeam sped ; the earth
And all the hills thereon like little specks
Vanished, while in the boundless void the car
Floated like a drop of golden dew ;
Till sudden they alighted on some world
That seemed more lovely than aught he knew. It was
The safe haunt of the foes of Indra, whence,
Armed with fraud, ire, malice, and despair,
The powers of evil, as is oft their wont,
Did seek to darken and deluge the world.
Dushyanta, with his prowess invincible
And courage that no foe could shake, spread awe
And waste destruction in the foe's phalanx,
Like fierce lightning among mountain-wilds ;
Till the fell foe retired in defeat
And left Dushyanta lord of all the field.

By Indra crowned with golden violets
And wreathed in Heaven's fadeless laurel, he
Then led by Matali, upon the slopes
Of Himalay descended, where the gods
Had raised a city which no human eye
Did see. So fair and yet not of the earth
The land, where e'ery breeze brings balm, and birds

Feeding on honey ever pour in song ;
Where all the seasons of the year in dance
Spill their rich treasure of ne'er-withering flowers ;
Them feed the native brooks that love to wind
On golden sands and beds of starry pearl ;
Where oft by the lily-mantled river banks
The golden-antlered antelope would pause
Fearless ; where the sun with friendly smile
Doth kiss the dewy sward and all the sky
Seems one clear sheet of sapphire, save
When on the air thin cloudlets float like swans
Sporting in numbers in a lake of blue ;
Where after sunset e'ery night the moon
Not waning but in full-orbed majesty
Shines bright, what time the starry splendour steals
From the twilight-mantled azure of the heavens,
And veils in silver all the stately cliffs.
Awhile Dushyanta wonder-stricken stood,
A mortal he among immortals ; joy
Dwelt in his heart and joy dwelt e'erywhere.

Then he alone repaired to where beside
A grove of lofty trees the hermitage
Of Maricha, one of sage Kanwa's blood,
Lay nestled in still peace ; in meditation

Dwelt the hermit of austere vows.
Dushyanta thither turned his steps, that he
Might bless his eyes with seeing him whose life
Was one long office of devout worship
And prayer. The hermitage he neared, when lo,
One strange sight met his wond'ring gaze; a child,
Not past four summers yet of royal mien,
In act to tear a whelp from off the dam,
He saw; a matron stood beside the child
Who while she said "Nay, nay" forced ope the jaws
Of the unwilling whelp in sport to count
Its tiny teeth. The matron begged the king,
Who seemed not stranger to the place, to free
The struggling whelp. Dushyanta saw the child
And in his eyes came tears; void was his heart
Of all the hope, that after him a youth,
A princely youth of his own blood, would rule
Hastinapur's lord; and thus he thought
"How happy he who calls himself the sire
Of such a smiling babe; love prophet-like—
Yet whispers vainly of some joy to come."
Then Dushyanta, with fond endearment full,
Approached the cherub child; but ere the king
Him urged, he let the little whelp go free;
And after saw with friendly eyes the king;

Friendly his face and friendly seemed his guise ;
And in those eager looks Dushyanta felt
A light familiar shone. Love for the child
Him prompted and he to the matron thus
" Kind matron, speak how came this child to dwell
In the blest region where the gods do come ;
What race, what parentage ; methinks a prince
Of promise doth he look : life's rosy prime
Portends the glorious noon to come." Whereat
The matron in brief words replied " Know him
A scion of the far-famed Puru's race ;
What time her wedded lord, the king, denied,
Hither came in grief Sakuntala
By Menaka, her divine mother, borne ;
While here the child first saw the light of day.
And since that hour she hath lived in vows,
Praying for her lord who erred from truth,
And denying her denied his rightful heir."
She knew not that she spake to Dushyanta ;
She ended ; when the king with joy too full
Spake not but pressed the child close to his heart.
So close he clasped, the wreath worn by the child,
Pressed fast, dropped on the ground : the self-same
wreath
Vove by Sakuntala what time she stayed

At Sacheeteertha ere she met the king ;
And when with Menaka she disappeared,
With her the wreath passed under other skies,
The sole companion of her woe, not fading
For the flowers drank heaven's dew. The King
Bowed his stately height and while in act
The fallen wreath to take, the matron thus
In haste "O meddle not ; the sage has breathed
A charm into the wreath which doth not brook
The touch of other hands than those of them
That gave him being ; for life's sake forbear,
Lest some great evil should ensue." But he,
Before she ended, heedless of her words,
Around the child's fair neck the charmed wreath
hung.

The child delighted smiled ; and in his heart
Dushyanta felt like one that eyes with joy
The fresh light of the morning calmly break
Upon the darkness of a weary night.

The matron, wond'ring that the charmed wreath
Had little power upon the king who seemed
In feature and in guise like to the child,
To Sakuntala hurried and told her all
About the fallen wreath, the child, and him

That touched it. She, the vexed Sakuntala,
(Alone unhappy she in that blest land)
Dismayed that even the wreath had lost the charm
Thro' fell adversity that darkened her day,
Stepped from Maricha's hermitage to where
Beneath the grove she saw her darling child,
Whose smile the solace in her woe, embraced
By one on whom she could not fix her gaze.
She came ; the child quick from the king's embrace
Tearing ran to her and claspt her knee
E'en as she stood. Dushyanta saw the child
And her who stood before him trembling ; wan
With sorrow all her face where joy ne'er dwelt
And hope cheered not ; faded was her cheek,
And clad in misery's worn mantle, she
Seemed like one in rigid vows. Tho' sad
Sakuntala, yet in her weary eyes
The light of calm devotion burned. He knew
Her his true-wedded wife whom he denied,
The chaste Sakuntala ; pale, pale she seemed,
Fore pale than e'en the palest flower of spring.
Then he advancing thus to her in tears
O lost on earth and found in heaven, forgive
The utter wrong, the sternness, and the lie,
And all the ignoble guilt ; in evil hour

These dull eyes never saw nor knew my heart
Thee blameless and my e'er beloved queen."
Thereat Sakuntala with gladdened heart,
Remembering what Sanumati said
To her of the repentant king, addressed
Dushyanta thus, while fond hope urged her lips
"Hail lord, e'er kind to me and merciful,
Blameless ye, for in your noble heart
No guilty thought can dwell ; adversity
Thus parted us and from life's blessedness—"
She said, her voice faltered and awhile
Touched with deep emotion she spake not ;
And after a moment's pause did gather speech ;
Like some slender torrent from a lofty cliff
Of Himalay that leaps and leaping downward
Breaks to spray and like the rain doth fill
With gentle drizzle and losing in mid air
Gathers nigh the sloping mountain-base
Into a stream, she fared ; then spake again
"How came in your void heart the happy thought
Of the tender love forgotten ?" And he said
"O let me wipe grief's bitter tear that seems
To linger yet upon thy wan pale cheek,
The warm tear that streamed from thy full eye,
When coming from thy home thou spak'st to me

At Hastinapur in the hour of noon
Of all the love we made in the still lone woods,
And I denied thee and denied thy word."
So saying he wiped with his hand her cheek
Whereon he saw or thought he saw the tear ;
Remorseful fancy dwells e'er on the past.)
and when he wiped, she felt as tho' he poured
Restoring balm into her heart that bled.
and ere the king withdrew his trembling hand
That pressed upon her cheek with fond caress,
Akuntala thereon beheld the ring
he knew so well ; the bright ring that she saw
y him when offered to Priyamvada
In the garden by the hermitage ; the same
e placed, the happy witness of their love,
n her finger when she lay on the flowery couch
eneath the bower, wan, weary, yet beautiful ;
he token ring, she found not when she spake
o Dushyanta in vain utterance, pleading
tears her innocence and all his love.
he saw and asked ; and her Dushyanta told
ow came to him the ring and at the sight
he memory of his past love to her flashed bright
ke lightning thro' the still dark of his thought.
them, that wondered at the event that passed,

Strange seemed the forgetting of that deep love,
And all the recollection yet more strange.

At this Maricha from the hermitage
Stepped out with Aditi, his wife, who helped
Her lord in humble wise ; they bore the yoke
Of life to noble ends ; for man alone
Doth not accomplish any purpose great
But with woman's aid : each save the other
Falls, while both do rise strong in twain love.
They came and saw Dushyanta and his queen
With the cherub child about her knee ; and as
They made him reverence, the sage thus spake
" Sakuntala, thy blameless lord awaits
Thee and thy child ; him follow to the realm
Whereof the king he rules ; the evil hour
Hath passed that troubled thee." Then he addressed
Dushyanta—more than human knowledge gained
The sage, by the subtle culture of his mind,
And sovereign power— " Blest king, in angry mood
Durvasa cursed Sakuntala e'en while
He called at Kanwa's hermitage and she
On thee her fancy pouring nor heard nor spake.
The shadow of that curse cleaved on to thee
And wrought her woe. What time Durvasa cursed,

Her name and all faded from thy memory ;
To Hastinapur coming she lost the ring,
Thou gavest her in token of your love ;
In Sacheeteertha did it slip. Nought save
The ring could in thy mind her thought revive ;
So cruel was the curse. Now fare ye well,
And let the gods pour all their golden gifts
Upon ye ; may the child in days to come
Rule righteous sovereign and the prince of men."
So in his day the great Bharata ruled,
And after him the land was called : the name *
(Yet unforgotten and more grand than Ind.)
The happy sequel was made known to all.
And they blest by the saintly pair returned
To Hastinapur on the sacred banks
Of lordly-rolling Jumna. She, consoled
That love in excess had brought all her woe,
And he, comforted that no guilty blame
Did stain the honor of his name and race,
With the baby-prince, amid the welcome cheer
Of loyal folk that hearing of his deeds
In other lands did wait to do their king
Great honor, Hastinapur entered, what time
Pushyanta started on a sportive chase

* Bharatkhand

Ere in the woods he met Sakuntala
Upon a day of spring, when e'ery morn
Bright rivulets flow hurrying as in sport ;
And whispering mountain-winds do love to kiss
Fresh woodland flowers, stealing sweet virgin
balm ;
And noonday shades do press with gentle sleep ;
And eve in the still wake of the sun-down hour
With dulcet lull comes on and happy calm.

So sang the bard and wrought the fairest pearl
That graced the Muse's wreath ; of him the song
That in Ujjaini lived in days of old,
When gladdening all the sacred land of Ind
With peace and joy, in fullest radiance,
The sun of Vikram's glory burned ; and he,
Most favoured of the Nine that in the court
Did dwell. And on the banks, with forests crowned,
Of Sipra, that from the mighty Vindhya rolls
Her crystal treasure to the plains and flows
Parting her wealth to many a famous realm,
The poet sang ; the cadence of his song
Sweet as the music of the spheres. He sang,
Great Nature heard ; the music of the bard
Possessed the woods and all ; the Muse was pleased

And ~~him~~-she made her own ; yet ne'er did sing
A sweeter minstrel here : perpetual yet fount,
~~Whence~~ flow sweet streams of honey that delight
The world, delighted in the days that were,
And ever to delight in days to be.

THE END

